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Humphreys, Alexander Crombie

Address at forty-second commencement of the...

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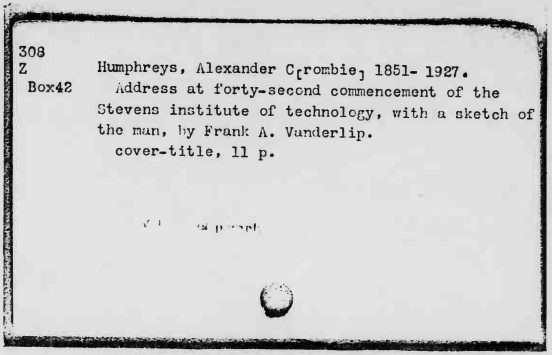

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Humphreys, Alexander C[rombie] 1851- 1927.
Address at forty-second commencement of the Stevens institute of technology, with a sketch of the man, by Frank A. Vanderlip.
cover-title, 11 p.

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Address

By

Alexander C. Humphreys

At

Forty-second Commencement of the Stevens Institute of Technology

308
Z
Box 42

With a Sketch of the Man

By

Frank A. Vanderlip

Sent out with the Compliments of George H. Paine, Philadelphia, Pa.

RS Ja 34-19

FORTY-SECOND COMMENCEMENT
STEVENS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

JUNE 9, 1914

OPENING REMARKS

BY

PRESIDENT ALEXANDER C. HUMPHREYS

On behalf of the Trustees and Faculty of Stevens Institute of Technology I extend to all present a hearty welcome to this our Forty-second Commencement.

Your presence to-day justifies me, I hope, in believing that you are sufficiently interested in our affairs to grant me a few minutes while I refer briefly to the work of the college year just ended.

Last September our entering class numbered 98 as compared with 101, September, 1912, and 110, September 1911. Our total enrollment this year immediately before the last term examinations was 294 as compared with 309 in 1913 and 324 in 1912. In this connection it is interesting to note that the Senior Class this year numbers 71 as compared with 69 in 1913 and 62 in 1912.

The falling off in enrollment is probably due to three causes: The increase in our tuition fees, our requirement of entrance examinations, and the increase in the number of schools of engineering.

This year we shall in a limited way follow the example of the majority of colleges and admit on the certificates of accepted high and preparatory schools so far as they can certify to the meeting of our requirements.

I hope that the day may come when the condition of our finances will warrant us in returning to our former rate of tuition charge, and so lessen one of the obstacles in the way of those seeking a higher education in engineering.

This class of 1914 began its life with us in 1910 with an enrollment of 131. To-day they number 68, almost 52%. The percentage of the original members of the class is somewhat less, as a few of those with us to-day entered the class after the Freshman year.

The names of a few of those who graduate to-day do not appear on the program because these men had some work to complete when the program went to press.

Three members of the class are not graduating to-day, but we hope and expect that they can complete their work during the summer and graduate in September. It is fair to state that one of this number, Frank Howard Trewin, is kept from graduating at this time through no fault of his own. He had to submit to an operation for appendicitis just as the last term examinations were beginning. Judging by the record of his work during the last term, he would have succeeded in passing his final examinations if he had not been thus prevented from taking the examinations.

Loring W. Batten, Jr., was a member of the class of 1913 during the Junior and Senior years, coming to us after graduating from the U. S. Naval Academy. He completed the work of those two years most satisfactorily, but last year he still had some minor deficiences in the more preparatory work. During the past year he has been acting as an assistant instructor in the Department of Experimental Engineering.

During the year we have not been called upon to meet any very serious questions of discipline. The Honor System and Student Self Government continue to work to the advantage of the students. Misunderstandings occur, but that is to be expected. At times the students have to be reinstructed that Student Self Government means that the students are expected to govern themselves along the lines laid down for them, and that the laws laid down are to be obeyed until they are repealed or amended.

I think it can be claimed that here at Stevens students and faculty take pride in the fact that hazing and cheating are taboo, and that clean athletics is more to be desired than victories on the field.

I hope the day is not far distant when we may have a building in which our students can take reasonable exercise during the winter months.

I am sorry to say that this last school year we have again shown a deficit in income. Our expenses were in excess of our income in the amount of $33,497.09. There is some little comfort in the fact that this is nearly $5,000 less than the deficit last year. The accumulated deficit for the last seven years is $184,447.07 against which we owe about $160,000.

We also owe on real estate purchased about $200,000; or $360,000 in all. I am happy to be able to announce that there now seems to be a good prospect that this debt may be soon removed and our endowment increased.

The General Education Board (Rockefeller Foundation), after a thorough examination of the Institute's finances and management in general, has agreed to give to the Institute $250,000, provided the debt of $360,000 shall first be paid, and then $750,000 shall be added to the Board's gift of $250,000.

The Board also very wisely stipulates that at least $500,000 of the $1,000,000 fund shall be set aside as an addition to the permanent endowment. With the addition to the income thus secured and the saving effected by eliminating the interest on the debt, the Institute would have a safe margin of income over expenses, and this after making needed increases in some of the salaries.

The action of the General Education Board, based as it is upon expert investigation, furnishes a guarantee to others that any financial help they may give will not be misplaced.

The provisional gift of the General Education Board placed upon us the task of raising $750,000 plus $360,000, or $1,110,000, to secure its $250,000. This was a large undertaking. But part of this great task has already been accomplished. Mr. Andrew Carnegie has generously added $250,000 under the same terms as condition the first $250,000.

A friend who does not wish to have his name mentioned promises $50,000 to the debt, provided the whole amount is raised not later than May 1, 1915, and my friend W. H. Childs subscribes $10,000 which can be applied to the debt.

So now instead of $1,110,000, we have to raise only $800,000. Not a small amount, but with the impetus given by the pledge of $560,000 we ought to complete the whole amount in a month or two.

If the U. S. Government should restore to us the $45,750 so unjustly withheld from us for more than forty years, this could be applied to the debt.

I have no doubt that our Alumni will work over this whole country and abroad to help me in lifting the burden under which our beloved Alma Mater has struggled these last years.

The Alumni, as usual, have been loyal and generous during the past year. Their contributions to the Graduates' Fund have amounted to about $5,000.

It gives me pleasure to record that the Undergraduates Dramatic Club and the Undergraduates Musical Club have each contributed $100 to the Gymnasium Fund.

This graduating class contributes to the same fund about $750, while making other contributions amounting to about $300. The class of 1914 is also taking action to pledge its members to a further contribution of $50 apiece, these subscriptions to carry 4% interest until the principal amounts are paid.

MEN OF THE CLASS OF 1914:

You are to hear to-day from a man closely identified with our work through his membership on our Board of Trustees. You are fortunate in the choice of a Commencement speaker for to-day, for Dr. Pritchett has had a wide experience as an educator, a government official, as an engineer, and now as the chief administrator of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. I know of no man in whose opinion I place such trust in educational questions as I do in that of Dr. Pritchett. Although you are to hear from a man so unusually qualified to advise with young engineer graduates about to put their training and their personalities to the test, I feel that I must also say a few words to you on this occasion which means so much to you and which, believe me, means so much for me.

You are going out into the field of productive effort to earn a support for yourselves and those dependent upon you. This is a worthy ambition as far as it goes. It is your duty to be self-supporting and to do your full share in helping to support those who are incapable of supporting themselves.

But this is not a sufficient statement of your responsibilities.

In this country to-day there are many problems being brought forward for solution. There is an evident tendency to diagnose our ills hastily and to apply remedies recklessly.

The desire for better conditions is commendable. But I fear the result of some of the present efforts to reform may prove to be disastrous, due to the lack of training and experience of the self-appointed reformers. We are undergoing a process of intensive

reform. If at times your heads get light with ideas which you may mistake for ideals, then make a supreme effort and anchor your feet to the ground with common sense.

Education, however obtained, places upon the possessor a distinct and commensurate responsibility to apply that education for the benefit of his fellows.

Many of the problems of the day have to do with the industries, and so your preliminary training here, which ends to-day, should qualify you for investigating these questions with some degree of authority. Your training in Science and Mathematics should qualify for the task of non-partisan investigation.

Judge Prouty, a lawyer by profession, formerly Chairman of the Interstate Commerce Commission, and now head of the U. S. Board to value the railroads of the country, in an address recently delivered, made a strong statement to the effect that while he had not thought so in the past, his experiences of late had led him to believe that the engineer, speaking generally, is better qualified temperamentally and by training to serve acceptably on the Public Service Commissions than is the lawyer.

I agree with Judge Prouty, of course with the understanding that an engineer is not necessarily qualified for the great responsibility of such a position simply because he is an engineer, no more than a man is qualified to be a judge because he is a lawyer. An engineer to be qualified for such responsibilities must have had experience as an administrator and must be familiar with the machinery of the business and civic world as well as familiar with the machinery of the factory.

You men have had some opportunities here at Stevens to prepare yourselves for these far-reaching responsibilities.

Go out now resolved to profit by every opportunity afforded by the school of experience to qualify yourselves for the grave responsibilities which must come to you, personal and public.

Don't shirk these responsibilities. Work to the limit of your effective mental and physical strength. On the other hand, avoid spreading your time and energies so thin that superficiality must result. Be thorough and tenacious in your efforts. Remember that the plodder who is willing to persist in working hard to accomplish the present purpose, while endeavoring constantly to increase his capacity for efficient effort, is much more likely to make a satis-

factory record of accomplishment than is the brilliant man who does things with little or no effort.

Particularly be cautious not to accept the view that new laws compensate for the non-enforcement of the old laws.

Remember that it is your duty to advocate and work for equal opportunity under the law for all, as opposed to anything and everything that smacks of class privilege or discrimination. In this connection do not be led astray by smooth phrases and high sounding sentiments. Keep your feet on the ground.

I suggest that to-day there is much preaching of liberty which might more honestly bear the label either of license or unjust restriction.

Here at Stevens you have had constantly before you the arguments in favor of co-operation and self-government. In the fields to which you are now going you will find that there are great opportunities for self-government, self-restraint, and co-operation. Remember there are always two sides to every question or there would be no question.

You will also find that much of the inefficiency in the world of work is due to lack of co-operation and that in great measure this lack of co-operation is due to misunderstandings and partial understandings.

Naturally, you men do not appreciate the responsibility I feel as I look into your faces and wonder and hope as to your future careers and fear that I may have failed to do all that I should have done to help you to real success.

I will ask you to believe that I hope and pray for your success and shall always rejoice in the report of your successes and mourn when you mourn.

Let me ask you to take away with you from this stage a full sense of your responsibility to Stevens. The Alumni of Stevens are justly noted for their loyalty to their Alma Mater; see to it that the class of 1914 helps to increase that reputation.

ALEXANDER C. HUMPHREYS.

[Reprint from *American Magazine*, March, 1914.]

If you wish to have designed a gas-producer plant which will develop maximum efficiency at mimimum cost, or if you need to

have solved some abstruse engineering problem, your judgment might well lead you to lower Broadway, New York, to consult with Alexander C. Humphreys, M.E., Sc.D., which appendages signify fame and ability in the engineering world. You will be charmed by the personality of the man, impressed with his keenness of mind, and imbued with confidence that you have come to the proper diagnostician of your technical desires and needs.

Instead, should you happen to be pondering on the question of a college for your son, you will do equally well to ferry across the North River and investigate the scholastic and character-building resources of Stevens Institute of Technology. As you enter the president's sanctum there you may be astonished to find Alexander C. Humphreys, LL.D., which in the world of letters signifies scholar and erudite gentleman. I say you may be astonished, for quite possibly you have never associated in your mind the college president, Doctor Humphreys, with the renowned engineer, Mr. Humphreys.

Personal magnetism is as dominant in the scholar as in the man of business. The college president you will find quite as convincing as the engineer. Doubts and anxieties as to the welfare of your son will be quickly dispelled by the forceful sincerity of this altruistic man, and you will go your way possessed of admiration and trust.

Dr. Humphreys was born in Edinburgh in 1851. His father was a famous classical scholar, and in his school the son was educated until he was fourteen years old. Meanwhile, in 1859, the family had moved to Boston, and there began for Humphreys the evolution which supplemented his rugged, enduring Scotch foundation of character with keen Americanism. The American Navy lost an officer when it declared young Humphreys ineligible for Annapolis at the age of fourteen, because of tender years. The insurance business likewise failed of its possibilities when two years later a company with which he was associated became insolvent. The financial world lost a potential captain when in 1872 he resigned from the New York Guaranty & Indemnity Company to become secretary and treasurer of the Bayonne & Greenville Gaslight Company.

In the Guaranty Company he had made rapid advances, but could not free himself from the predilection for engineering opera-

tions. His success in his new vocation soon justified his choice of a career, but he often felt that he was groping in the dark because of his lack of a technical education. At this juncture, the power of analysis and tenacity of purpose which have been pre-eminent factors in his life asserted themselves. He concluded that he must parallel his practical work with scientific education. The resolution once taken, adverse circumstances formed no effectual barrier. The students of Stevens Institute were finding it difficult enough, devoting all their time to academic work, to complete the course in four years. Young Humphreys could attend lectures only two mornings a week, but acquired the regular degree in four years, with a few extra honors for good measure, and President Morton and the faculty passed a special resolution congratulating him upon his achievement. Shortly after graduation, in 1881, he became chief engineer of the Pintsch Lighting Company, which position he relinquished in 1885 to assume general executive control of the United Gas Improvement Company. During his ten years' incumbency there, he practically revolutionized the gas business, not only in methods of production and distribution, but also in organization. His power of constructive imagination inspired vast conceptions, which developed into the wonderful system of management and co-ordination of the forty subsidiary companies—a monumental achievement in the industry.

The presidency of Stevens Institute became vacant in 1902 through the death of President Morton. During all the years since his graduation, Doctor Humphreys had a deep and abiding affection for his Alma Mater and for Doctor Morton. He had been a trustee of the Institute since 1891, and Doctor Morton's *fidus Achates*. With one accord trustees, faculty and alumni acclaimed Doctor Humphreys as their choice, and at great personal sacrifice he took up the work of the presidency. Unceasingly, indefatigably, he has labored for the Institute.

To use his own words: "Relaxation lies (for him) in diversity of thought, not in cessation of effort." He has brought to the administration of this educational institution the atmosphere of business. His practical point of view does not permit the submersion of facts in a sea of scholastic theories. Nor has he allowed the institution to be recruited by any tendency toward "popular" standards or unwarranted allurement in its catalogue. He has inculcated in

the collective heart and soul of the student body his own splendid integrity, for the system of honor and student control has been established and has thoroughly justified its creation.

Doctor Humphreys has been active in raising money for the Institute and has given much himself—more perhaps than he can well afford, for he has always subordinated the pursuit of wealth to that of ideals. He has acquired through persistent effort a large tract of land, adjacent to the Institute, for its expansion. He is making a success as a college president as he has as an engineer. The University of Pennsylvania conferred upon him the degree of Sc.D., and Princeton, Columbia and New York universities have given him the degree of LL.D.

Doctor Humphreys is a many-sided man. He has demonstrated his good equipment as an all-round business man. He has developed his engineering talent in a way that has placed him in the front rank of technical experts. He has shown great ability as a college president, both on the pedagogic and administrative sides, but with all the activities necessary to success in these several fields he has had both time and inclination for the fine arts, and among connoisseurs few men have been more encouraging to the development of American art or have brought together a more representative collection of pictures from American brushes.

An ideal of public service has always been before Doctor Humphreys, both in his work as a business man and an educator, and much of his time has been well given to semi-public matters. In all his relations he has shown himself a modest and patriotic citizen. Every man who has had business relations with him, and every student who has come under his influence, has great respect for the man and for his work.

FRANK A. VANDERLIP.

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